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# DISCOURSE

COMMEMORATIVE OF

## OUR ILLUSTRIOUS MARTYR,

DELIVERED IN

Congregational Church, South Abington,

FAST DAY, JUNE 1, 1865.



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BY

REV. HENRY L. EDWARDS.

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REV. H. L. EDWARDS:

DEAR SIR,—It would gratify many who were not present, and many who were, to see in print your very acceptable Discourse in memory of ABRAHAM LINCOLN, as delivered on occasion of the National Fast.

MANY PARISHIONERS.

SOUTH ABINGTON, June 4, 1865.



# S E R M O N .

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ACTS, viii. 2.

“AND DEVOUT MEN CARRIED STEPHEN TO HIS BURIAL, AND MADE GREAT LAMENTATION OVER HIM.”

And so devout men bore Abraham Lincoln to his burial, and made great lamentation over *him*. Devout *men!* Devout *multitudes*; for Cities, Commonwealths, nay, the whole Country, rose up, in tearful tribute, as those mortal remains moved on to their soft slumber, amid the spreading prairies of the West. For two memorable weeks did a loving people tenderly detain the cherished dust of their endeared President, that their tears might have time to flow; and the funeral cortege stretched a thousand miles unbroken, from the waters of the weeping Atlantic, toward the setting sun. The atmosphere was draped; buildings were in ebony; every balcony was a catafalque; and every street, and the long line of railroad, seemed one shaded avenue, leading to the Mausoleum of the dead. The precious casket was covered with costliest and sweetest flowers, and every countenance was a symbol of bereavement. Was there ever such a spectacle? Did the sun ever, in all its circuit, look down upon such a scene? A whole nation a weeping Niobe. When Prince Albert, and Lafayette, and Edward Everett, were borne to their burial, mighty men were bowed with grief; but the burial of Abraham Lincoln was unprecedented. When the great Washington departed this life, the country was covered with sackcloth. “It was a day of darkness, and of doubtful expectation,” says a cotemporary. There was then, however, but a small population comparatively to mourn. When the first Christian martyr was carried to his sepulchre in Jerusalem, devout men, as we have just heard, made great lamentation

over him. And still it was but a handful of fond and faithful associates who attended, or dared to attend, his funeral obsequies. The language of the text has waited till now, for its most complete exemplification. Never till now, such general lamentation; and the days of our mourning are not ended. Weeks have elapsed, and the turf is growing green upon the new-made mound, in that distinguished necropolis, but men have not forgotten the latest, the mournful, and the ever to be remembered martyrdom. The name of Alexander shall be effaced, the fame of Napoleon shall perish, ere the memory of the eminent martyr of liberty; that memory shall remain, while sun and moon endure.

“Many, dear man, have mourned for thee,  
And yet shall many mourn,  
Long as thy name on earth shall be  
In sweet remembrance borne.”

And many shall make pilgrimages, from age to age, to the place which marks thy last repose. Oh, mighty Mississippi, flow gently past; oh, ye prairie winds, utter ye his long requiem.

On the 19th of April, a day historic in Massachusetts, and rendered doubly so by late occurrences, we were assembled in this house, in common with the people of other communities, and States, to pour the incense of our heartfelt sorrow, upon the altar of *such* a memory. To-day we are assembled again, in obedience to the proclamation of the new President, and in accordance with the precedent at the death of Washington. What but an almost unexampled sorrow, would have seemed to sanction such an appointment? And what lesser bereavement would have brought together in the land the second time, such numbers, to testify of their affliction, and their affection? Truly, the days of our mourning are not ended; and to-day is to me, too sacred for neglect, or trifling festivities.

It will not be inappropriate to this occasion, certainly, to consider some of the reasons for this prolonged lamentation. Our first thought then is naturally this. We are in mourning for our *ruler*. No man, out of office, however eminent and beloved, would have been mourned like this. Gen. Washing-

ton's death sixty-six years ago, did not cause so much grief, great as it was, as had the same event three years earlier, while he was yet in the Presidency. Let Abraham Lincoln have completed his second term, however honorably, and subsequently died in private life, though the death of a remarkable man had been chronicled, and many had mourned, still the whole country would never have attended his funeral as now. Nor would any rank but that of President have so touched the popular heart. Much of the mourning over President Harrison's and President Taylor's death was due to the fact, that they died, when standing at the head of the nation. It is analogous to the removal of a valued father in a family. It is not altogether because we *loved* that honored sire. The heartstrings are not more tenderly agitated than at the departure of a mother, or sister, or daughter; perhaps not so much. But it is the misfortune, it is the loss, the breaking up of our dependence, the disappointment of our plans. Affliction is not always simply the measure of affection. It is partly the product of self-interest. We felt that we could not spare President Lincoln because he was our head; not only one of the family, but the first and chief; "the great father of many people," as it is in the book of the Macabees. Dying in that relation, he would have been regretted, had he been loved far less than he was. The death of James Buchanan even, while President, would have been attended with some anxious regrets. Doubtless Domitian was honored with mourners at his demise; It is recorded of Nero, that he "received an honorable burial;" and of Caligula that "there were those who sincerely mourned him, and honored his remains;" so strong a hold upon human nature has the idea of ruler and administrator. But our chief cannot be a tyrant nor usurper. He is our choice for the time being; and, therefore, a stroke at his life, be it Buchanan, or Lincoln, so far as the presidency is concerned, is a stroke at yours and mine. The blow is felt through every branch of the great household. The public heart bleeds. Monarchies have misunderstood us. They have thought that strong attachments between the government and the subject, in a republic, are impossible, and that only hereditary authority can be ardently revered and loved. Because we

change our rulers, at short intervals, they imagine that, though the same be removed by death, there is little or no love lost. This is a grand mistake of theirs; and they have seen it in this case, and gracefully acknowledged it. The truth is, we have no blind respect for the person, irrespective of the power. But that power the people have put in his hands for a period, and the power is a part of us; and whoso toucheth that, toucheth the apple of our eye. Thus the murderer of our Chief Magistrate has murdered a member of every family. It is a death in every dwelling. No grief, when death lays low one of our own number! Is that so? Nay; the affliction is felt in every limb and leaf of the family tree. A republic partakes of the family constitution, as no other nationality can, and therefore the assassination of our paternal head has thrilled through every artery of the national heart, as no assassination of Napoleon III., or the Pope of Rome, or even the idolized Queen of the British Isles, would have affected those foreign empires.

But I would observe, secondly, that in addition to the *political* element in our bereavement, there is peculiarly, in the present instance, a *personal* sorrow; for we mourn not only a *ruler* dead, but a *GOOD* ruler. We have not always been favored with wise and virtuous presidents, although they have been of our own choice. We do not always choose well. It is indeed terrible now to look back beyond the rebellion, and the bloodshed, and the numberless bereavements, to the two administrations which preceded, and consider the influence which they had in producing sedition, rebellion, assassination; which administrations, even if they meant well, and even while they did many things well, were yet so weak, and unwittingly corrupt in respect to Southern proclivities, as to conspire with the slave-power, for the lasting perpetuation of oppression in the land; and it is a striking testimony to the strength of our political frame-work, that it has survived the shock, that it has outrode the storm, which was steadily gathering under so many years of maladministration. When the counsels of this nation were carrying us headlong, Almighty God came to our rescue, and raised up for us a ruler of royal sagacity, and integrity; a *man*, long before he was president,—

“Statesman, yet friend to truth ; of soul sincere,  
 In action faithful, and in honor clear ;  
 Who broke no promise, served no private end,  
 Who sought no title, and who lost no friend ;  
 Ennobled by himself, by all approved,  
 Praised, wept, and honored, by the world he loved.”

Such a ruler was elected, and re-elected ; and, believe me, my hearers, I am not mortified now, that I plead with you last November to put this pilot again at the helm, with the persuasion that, “under this pilot, we should weather the storm,” venturing the prediction moreover,—no very profound prediction,—that, if elected, and treason, and base rebellion, were invited to enter upon the long stretch of another period of four years, the foul conspiracy would be scattering before the time of the singing of birds should come ; and, furthermore, that the fact of his re-election would strike the fetters surely from four millions of bondmen, whom HE did not scorn to own as brethren, and for whose liberation he “humbly invoked the favor of Almighty God.” Noble man !

“He was not born to shame,  
 Upon his brow shame was ashamed to sit.”

“He was a man, take him for all in all,  
 We shall not look upon his like again.”

How conscientious, how courageous, how constant, how incorruptible, how gentle, how truthful, how transparent, how patient, how patriotic, how sympathetic ; how trustworthy his conclusions ; slow, perhaps, but sure ; tried as none beside has been, but, like Abraham of old, “found faithful in temptation,” and ever committing his way unto the Lord. Such a ruler have we lost. No ordinary character. Read again his last words at Springfield, at Philadelphia, at Gettysburg. They map out the man better than any analysis of mine. “The elements were so mixed in him ;” his enemies concede it, and blush to think that they ever were his enemies. The nations that sneered are all united now in rendering him homage. Even Punch invokes the Muses, and makes an humble acknowledgment ;—

“ Yes he had lived to shame me from my sneer,  
 To lame my pencil, and confute my pen,—  
 To make me own this kind of prince’s peer,  
 This rail-splitter, a truc-born king of men.

So he grew up a destined work to do,  
 And lived to do it; four long-suffering years,  
 Ill-fate, ill-feeling, ill-report lived through,  
 And then he heard the hisses changed to cheers.

The Old World and the New, from sea to sea,  
 Utter one voice of sympathy and shame;  
 Sore heart, so stopped when it at last beat high;  
 Sad life, cut short just as its triumph came.”

We do, indeed, my hearers, make great and prolonged lamentation over him. But, as was said of the centurion, “ he is worthy for whom we do this.” As King David said at the burial of Abner, “ Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel ? ”

But a third reason for our extraordinary grief relates to his sudden and violent end. Our sensibilities are so shocked at the crime that caused his death, greater grief than otherwise is unavoidable. “ The most arch deed of piteous massacre that ever yet this land was guilty of ; ” and it has stirred the sympathies of mankind, as no natural death had done. Witness the demonstrations of condolence from people and kingdoms abroad. And no doubt they are sincere ; not, certainly, the affectations of sheer hypocrisy.

“ In the sight of this great crime,” says Lord John Russell in the House of Lords, “ the Crown, the Parliament, and the People of Great Britain do feel the deepest sympathy with the United States.” The Earl of Derby has not been our best friend, be sure. But “ we view with horror,” he declares, “ with detestation, and indignation, the atrocious crime.” “ It has produced a feeling of horror and indignation throughout the civilized world,” was the language used in the Corps Legislatif of France. And so it was in the Congress of Spain, and Italy, and Austria, and from every nation of note under heaven. And how was it here at home ? You have not forgotten ? Black day indeed in our calendar. The sky seemed dark at noon. Men held their breath. They solemnly and

religiously vowed the extermination of the assassins. If slavery had not been doomed before, it was then. If the murderers had any sympathizers, such thought it prudent to hold their peace, in every place, from the Bay of Fundy to San Francisco. Scarce a dog dared to move his tongue. You can imagine how modified the grief, had Abraham Lincoln, died like Washington, at his own fireside, and by the hand of disease. Not so keen the poignancy of the public or private sorrow; yes, how it had mitigated the *family* affliction, if the desolate companion of our late President, like the mourning matron of Mt. Vernon, could have had but two days of preparation, as Mrs. Washington had, for the parting pangs; or, even as it was, if but one word of intelligent recognition could have fallen from his pale lips.

“Oh, horrible; hellish, crime!  
Murder most foul, as in the best it is;  
But this most foul, strange, and unnatural.  
Aye, heaven and earth do cry, impossible;  
The shuddering angels, round the eternal throne,  
Shriek impossible, this damn'd assassination.”

But feeling baffles all expression. To dwell on the damnable-ness of the deed, will not do. The man who says he is glad at such a deed, ought to lie, side by side, with the murderous demon, in an unknown grave.

I must go on to say, in the fourth place, that the general grief is aggravated by the thought that our great leader through the long wilderness of blood, and tears, and hopes delayed, and murmurings oft, though coming, like the renowned leader of old, in plain sight of peace, and rest, was yet not permitted to enter the promised land. “And Moses went up from the plains of Moab to the top of Pisgah, and the Lord showed him all the land unto the utmost sea, and the *South!* And the Lord said, this is the land which I swear unto thee; I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.” Glory and thanksgiving forever be to God, that our Moses, in like manner, was spared to go up to Pisgah’s top, and, after what he had endured, himself behold Gilead, and all the goodly land. From that glorious height, he doubtless ascended to that Being,

whose blessing, and interposition, he had so often supplicated. He is in the many mansions, we are on the march; our loss is his great gain. And yet our weak nature will have its way, and the heart will ache at the thought, that he, whose heroic patience had overcome the complainings of friends, and conquered the uprisings of the enemy, might not live to preside over a peaceful, and tranquil, and undivided nation. Must he sow only in tears, that others may reap in joy! O, arm of the Lord, divide Jordan, and let thy suffering servant pass over! But is this forbidden! Then, "Thy will be done, O Lord!" We had hoped to see his honest face, and welcome him, in some future tour among these loyal States, which stood faithfully by him, in extremity. But we will be content to remember, and thank the Lord, that ere he died, the gates of the rebel capital, which had been four years barred, had been broken down, and hand in hand with little Tad, with a republican simplicity that was worthy of the best days of Rome, he was able to tread with his own feet, those proud pavements. "When Charles the Bold captured Liege, he ordered the citizens to batter down a new entrance in their walls, in honor of his triumphal entry. Louis the Great, and so King David, were wont to take possession of conquered cities, with the utmost pomp. But our lamented Lincoln is attended by only a few marines, without music, or banners, and honored most by the crowds of bondmen, who hailed him as their Liberator, and danced before him in ecstasies of delight." But he is gone—

"War at his feet his thundering trump had dashed,  
 And Peace was taking up her warbling lyre,  
 And flowers were burying soft the thorns—when flashed,  
 How quick! how deadly, the assassin's fire:  
     Gone when our skies were bright  
 With promise; when the rainbow's lovely light  
 Was breaking; when white Peace, the glittering dove,  
 Threw courier colors on the cloven cloud;  
 When promised spring was bursting, and above,  
 And round were ringing halleluias loud."

Saturday, just six weeks before the day of his death, in a second Inaugural, which is worthy of being handed down with the farewell Address of Washington, and from a seat of power



superior to any other upon the face of the earth, he pronounced these words, "Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that the mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away." His prayer was answered sooner than he expected. Let us be pacified, in our disappointment and bereavement, to remember, that he finished the great work God gave him to do, and was at once called to go up higher. "Good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

One other reason for our extraordinary grief, I had purposed to mention. There has been from the beginning of our affliction, and must be for the present, no little solicitude as to the conduct of Mr. Lincoln's successor. No sooner had the first throb of anguish a little subsided, than the reflection arose, who is to take the reins now, and what will the consequences be? Any change would have caused anxiety. Our lamented President had been behind the scenes, and had better opportunities than any other man, to learn, in the process of conquering rebellion, how to deal with it, when conquered. And beside he had so peculiarly the confidence of the people, as to guide the affairs of the nation from a vantage-ground, which the best of successors could not attain without time. And then we had no choice as to the successor. We did not seriously consider a vacancy, when nominating the Vice-President. If we had, it is not certain that we should have made any wiser selection. But it is quite probable that it would have been a different person. However, it must be Andrew Johnson, for better or worse. And then to crown all, this very individual had just signally dishonored himself, as it was believed, in the eyes of the two continents, and the word had often been whispered round, what if Mr. Lincoln should be taken away! And lo! the very thing that we feared, had come upon us. And it seemed as if our apprehensions, but partially concealed, had stimulated the assassins to their fell, infernal deeds; who, embittered, be sure, against the Administration, but more envenomed against the Union, had sought to stab liberty, and extinguish the life of the nation. And oh! how these tempestuous thoughts rushed through the mind that Saturday, and we were almost mad with grief and agony. And

of course we cannot yet be wholly assured, although, as for the inaugural disgrace, there is much reason to believe that "a rebel's hand put poison to the lips." I shall have something to say, in a moment, of our grounds of encouragement, and our growing confidence. And still the policy of the new President has yet mainly to be developed, and strong and cheering as are our expectations, we can nevertheless tell better, four years hence than now, whether the man who has suddenly been called to the helm, has capacity in proportion to his marvellous courage, and dauntless heroism; and breadth to gauge the magnitude of our mighty interests, like his lamented predecessor. Alexander always carried in his pocket, a copy of the Iliad, that he might form his character after the delineation of Homer's heroes. So our present Chief Magistrate has ever at hand an illustrious model. The indications are certainly favorable that he will follow after that which is good.

Considering thus the various features in our great affliction—the loss of our President, a great and good President, an assassinated President, and just as a better day was dawning on him, and the uncertainty as to what should follow, surely no community of mankind in the world will marvel at the information, that great multitudes of people "carried him to his burial, and made great lamentation over him."

But are there no alleviating suggestions? Truly there are. And one and another have been noticed, incidentally. But think again, for a few moments, what manner of consolation we have. The first and last consolation, the fundamental and eternal consolation, is the glorious truth that God reigns. As the old contraband said, "They can't 'sassinate God;" and it is high time that wicked men, the world over, found it out. Oh! when will men learn that it is of no use to attempt to have their own way, so long as God Almighty is on the throne? They may trample on the truth, and think they have extinguished it. They may rebel against righteousness, and run up the devil's flag. They may abuse all the beseechings of mercy; kill, starve, spread contagion, kidnap, enslave, lash, let loose their lusts, break all laws, human and divine, and flatter themselves that they have conquered in Satan's cause; or,

failing of that, that they have at least escaped the consequences of their crimes. But God lives, and God is after them ; “evil pursueth” them. And they will go down in “the last ditch,” if not before. Haman is hung on the gallows he prepared for Mordecai. The counsel of Ahithophel is come to nought. Pharaoh and his hosts are drowned in the depths of the sea. GOD hath gotten us the victory. Sing unto the Lord, for HE hath triumphed gloriously. “Man’s battles, but GOD’s war.”

“When King Arthur lay dying, he ordered his ponderous sword, with which he had wrought his great victories, to be sunken in a lake ; accordingly it was lifted high by his trusty knights, and cast forth over the waves ; and as it glittered in the moonlight, and cleft its way down through the air, toward the depths, uprose from the waters a mysterious hand, arrayed in white samite, grasping the weapon by the hilt, brandishing it with awful majesty, and drawing it down out of sight.” No wonder that three thousand people assembled on a recent occasion, applauded the beautiful parallel, while the orator described our “government as drawing forth its sword of war, and lifting it on high to strike the blow, but God, as having caught it out of our weak hand, and, with his own divine right arm omnipotent, hewed out our way to victory.”

My friends ; President Lincoln, dearly beloved, is no longer alive ; but the LORD liveth for ever and ever. Immortal consolation. It was hard to bow in submission to this terrible stroke, and plant such precious expectations in six feet of earth. But it was God’s will, and God will plant upon his bloody grave the pillars of a purer, stronger, holier government. As for himself, he went up in the fulness of his fame. There is nothing to be regretted. He might have stood as *high* in the public esteem hereafter. I think he would—such a man—but never higher ; it were hardly possible. A measure that is full cannot be any fuller. Some have said, he might have failed in the difficult task of reconstruction ; I do not believe it. He had a many-sided mind ; could adapt himself to different conditions ; was not so much of a professional, as a universal man. Said one who knew him intimately, “The most extraordinary thing about him was, that he was

equal to any emergency. He never disappointed you by falling below the occasion." And so Stephen A. Douglas once said, "Lincoln is one of the peculiar men who perform with admirable skill whatever they undertake." No! men! He would not have failed. His was the genius of the last administration, undoubtedly, and would have been of this. Could he not have acted the executioner? Could he have written his name, think you, to no death-warrant? He was humane, it is true, yet stern; merciful, but none of your miserable mercy which mangles justice. He had the heart of a woman. There was no butchery in his nature. And yet, for the sake of justice, he declared, in his first address, "Bloody war shall be waged, if need be." And you know he never flinched, through four years of blood and bitterest sorrows. And what did he declare in his last address? "If God wills that the war continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.'" A man who uttered such words, and did such deeds, have failed in the final issue? Never! Suffer the sword to fall inexorably upon hundreds of thousands of the poor deluded victims of the rebellion, and let Jeff. Davis and his compeers in crime escape? Never! no more than Andrew Johnson. Our slaughtered President would have been true to the end. But he had honor enough; let him depart. Raised up from the obscurity of a log cabin to be the foremost man in all the world, and to have a niche in the temple of fame through all time, what more could aspiration ask? The Conqueror of the rebellion, and the Liberator of the bondman. Honorable epitaph. Sleep on, thou illustrious hero.

"Thou in our wonder and astonishment  
Hast built thyself a livelong monument,  
And so sepulchred, in such pomp dost lie,  
That Kings, for such a tomb, would wish to die."

"Few," as said Dr. Emmons, fifty years since, "have heads and hearts equal to the great design of delivering nations from

slavery and ruin." Our Deliverer is made a martyr, but the cause survives: our chieftain is cut off, but the nation and country continue. And the mantle of the ascended Elijah falls upon his successor.

"Martyr of Freedom: may thy mantle rest  
 On him who standeth now to help and save: •  
 While every drop that from thy wounds outpressed,  
 Shall bloom in flowers on Treason's bloody grave."

Foul crime would fain serve the cause of treason and oppression, and lengthen out the wretched slaveholders' rebellion. But it only breathes its last the sooner, and now it is dead, plucked up by the roots, blasted finally, and forever, by the blow that deprived Abraham Lincoln of his life. "Assassination," as says D'Israeli, "has never changed the history of the world. The costly sacrifice of Cæsar did not propitiate the inexorable destiny of his country! The violent death of Henry the Fourth of France, and the Prince of Orange, are conspicuous examples to the same intent. There is no cause for depression in the United States. From this awful trial, from this violent demise of their chief, the American people will come, chastened and regenerated." Thank you, Brother Englishman: it is even so: we are *not* discouraged. We are chastened, but not killed; cast down, but not destroyed; troubled, but not in despair. The councils of Great Britain, as we have heard, were distracted, and all but blasted, so soon as the celebrated Pitt ceased to breathe. Solomon's death divided the kingdom. And so after the death of Joshua, there was a long age of anarchy. But *our* honorable man, and mighty man, and counsellor, is taken away, and there is no interregnum, nor commotion. It speaks volumes for the perpetuity of our government.

And now let us strive to strengthen liberty, as we have conquered it; first by walking humbly before God; and secondly by observing the great law of love to man, of whatever nation, complexion, or superscription. Let us dare to be just. Let us do right, though the heavens do fall. Let us hang high treason, or ostracise it; in some way exterminate it, to all eternity.

“Oh Justice, heaven-born, with radiant brow severe,  
 Lift thy majestic form on Reason's throne;  
 Bid grief henceforth suppress the futile tear,  
 And bare the sword to vindicate thine own.”

And let us give, moreover, the long degraded negro his due. Give him the Bible, and the ballot, as well as the bullet. If he has used the one as well as we, he will the other. And if he does not quite as well, yet do right. If he has borne arms for us, he ought to have a voice. Three hundred thousand of them have turned the tide to victory, and saved the country. If we so wrong them now, the shades of Fort Wagner and Fort Pillow will plead to God against us. Qualify the freedman to read and write, and vote, as soon as possible, and let him make the most of himself that he can. And if you can't keep ahead in the race, call him the *smarter* of the two. So establish the liberty which is begun. Build on the foundations which were laid by the lamented and illustrious dead, and the memory of the just, as I hasten to say in conclusion, shall be blessed.

“Forever green will his loved memory flourish,  
 Forever green when marble piles decay,  
 Green in his soul's grand thoughts the land shall nourish,  
 Green in the deeds its destinies shall sway.”









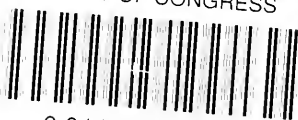


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